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ABSTRACT

"Channel One" is a 12-minute educational television news program broadcast daily to thousands of schools in the United States each school morning. The purpose of this research project was to study and describe how Channel One is used by social studies teachers and their students in the classroom, and what impact this use had on teachers and students. Three schools in central Indiana (two junior high schools and one senior high school) were the focus of the study. Information was gathered in three forms: interviews with principals and teachers; observations of Channel One broadcasts, ensuing discussion in homerooms, and regular social studies classes; and questionnaires administered to students, parents, and teachers. A brief sketch of two Channel One broadcasts and ensuing discussions in each of the junior high schools is detailed. The study findings cover six areas: Outcomes from using Channel One; Use of Channel One in classrooms; Quality and objectionable content of Channel One programming; Are the Channel One commercials objectionable?; Overall value of Channel One for schools; and Suggestions for improving Channel One programs. The research findings were that: teachers were not making extensive use of Channel One; students were more critical of the quality of Channel One than teachers; and the commercials were viewed by most students, parents, and teachers as non-problematic. A list of questions for further research is included, as is a list of 15 references. (DB)

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Using Channel One in Social Studies Classrooms: A First Look

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council for the Social Studies, Washington D.C. November 22, 1991.

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Introduction and Purpose

"Channel One" is an 12-minute educational television news program broadcast daily to over 9,000 schools in the U. S. each morning of the school week, thus reaching over 6 million students each school day. Its avowed purpose is to inject into the secondary school curriculum knowledge and interest about national and global current affairs. In addition to ten minutes of news reporting, two minutes of commercial advertising is included in each broadcast, a controversial aspect of the program that has resulted in a few states and many school districts deciding not to adopt the programming.

Whittle Communications, a for-profit firm based in Knoxville, Tennessee, began delivering the program on a production basis in August, 1991, after two years of planning and field testing. The company provides at no cost to each participating school a satellite antenna, receiver, and video recorder; television monitors for each 23 students; and installation of cabling which links all these components to classrooms of the schools. In return for this equipment, which becomes the school's property after three years, the school obligates all students to watch the broadcast, including commercials, each school day.

This programming adds over 26 hours of information during a 180-day school year, most of it highly related to social studies purposes. The delivery of the information is through a medium, television, that is generally accepted and attended to by students. Channel One is viewed by virtually all students, not just an unpredictable fraction, so that social studies teachers can count on a common starting point of basic news information for discussions and other class work. Some of the news content is controversial, adding possibilities for studying the "problematic aspects of American culture" championed by Hunt and Metcalf (1968). Channel One presents a new teaching tool--if teachers choose to use it.

The purpose of this research is to study and describe how Channel One is used by social studies teachers and their students in the classroom, and what impact this use has on teachers and students. Additionally, the study will derive perspectives and questions for subsequent research.

Controversy and Early Studies

The passage of Channel One into the school market has been a stormy one. Some professional organizations, and many columnists, have opposed it vigorously in the press. The American Association of School Administrators has adopted an official policy statement aimed at banning Channel One from classrooms (Graves 1990). Educational writers have debated its merits, from the idea of commercials in classrooms to its programming quality, and most conclude that it is inferior to non-commercial alternatives. See, for example, Rudinow's (1989/90) attack with responses and rejoinders, or Rist's (1989) advice to school boards. Searches of newspaper databases reveal scores of articles and editorials on Channel One, with the editorials nearly always opposing Channel One's commercials on ethical grounds, or the lack of depth and other qualities of the programming. Specters of Big Brother are also often raised by journalists and educators.

Many school districts, and a handful of states, have banned Channel One from schools. New York, Indiana, Louisiana, Rhode Island, California, North Carolina are states in which school boards have either been prohibited outright or limited in some way in adopting Channel One--there are probably others. In Indiana, as in Louisiana, the State Attorney General ruled that if adopted the time for presenting Channel One must come during non-instructional time. In North Carolina, the state's Board of Education unsuccessfully brought suit to dislodge Channel One from the Davidson County schools, based on the Board's administrative rule banning the program. The state's Supreme Court found the rule in excess of the Board's constitutional authority, and permitted Davidson County to retain the television programming (State of North Carolina v. Whittle Communications, 1991).

However, in a vigorous dissent in this ruling, Justice Martin (with Justice Exum joining in the dissent) argues forcefully against Channel One as an example of "educational materials." I quote him at length here because his argument contains important curriculum and instruction questions, addressed in the present study:

> ...there is serious issue as to whether Channel One is instructional. The evidence discloses that the students are not required to use Channel One in any way. They are not required to view it, and during the time when it is being exhibited every student in the school could absent himself from the showing of Channel One. How can materials be instructional if the students are not required to use them? Further, there is no evidence that any teacher or other person explains Channel One or uses it in any way while it is being exhibited or thereafter. No teacher expounds upon Channel One to any students, whether assembled to watch Channel One or in any other way. In short, Channel One is not used as instructional material. Also, there is no evidence that students are tested in any way upon the matters broadcast over Channel One. No teacher questions any student concerning his viewing of Channel One, and no student is required to prepare any essay or other written material concerning Channel One. The students are not in any way required to demonstrate any knowledge of the materials in Channel One that they might acquire en passant. It is apparent that whatever is broadcast over Channel One is not "instructional" material, but is more in the nature of entertainment which students might enjoy during recess. (p. 567)

While the present research will show evidence that some teachers do sometimes use Channel One in their classes as discussion material, and, while seldom, as the basis for tests and assignments, this use is rather modest, and Justice Martin's assertion that Channel One is not instructional material is one worth investigating thoroughly.

A very small amount of analytical and empirical research has been conducted on Channel One. The one rigorous ethical analysis of the program located so far addresses the value context surrounding arguments about instruction and curriculum aspects, and raises questions about political and economic ideologies, autonomy, and control (Hoffman 1991).

The few empirical studies shed little light on the subject. Wulfemeyer and Mueller (1990) content analyzed Channel One commercials, and found no surprises. The commercials are aimed at teenagers, use rock music, contain leisure and pleasure themes, emphasize appearance and sexuality, and have few non-Caucasian models acting in them. They did find that public service announcements comprised a larger proportion of total commercial content (15%) than on commercial television generally. Haney (1989) compared Channel One and CNN Newsroom (a non-commercial school rival) with respect to format, production, and marketing, but warns that most of those debating about television in schools miss an important point--educated citizens must do more than watch TV news to be well-informed. Postman (1985) echoes this concern.

A survey study of 51 North Carolina and Mississippi schools claims that while student knowledge of current events improved from October to December, 1990, the change could not be attributed to Channel One (Supovitz 1991). However, students in those Mississippi schools "...in which teachers integrated video news programs into their lessons showed significantly better knowledge of current events than either classes that did not integrate these programs or classes that had no video news programs at all" (p. ii-iii). This difference did not occur for North Carolina schools. It is difficult to interpret the quality and importance of these findings, because the full report was not available. The issue of teachers' integrating of Channel One into their instruction, raised by Justice Martin above, is important, and is a main concern of the present research.

Research Methods

Three schools in central Indiana were included in the study after 16 Channel One schools were contacted by telephone about interest and access. The three were selected because they were geographically accessible to me (within 75 miles), and because the principals of each school expressed an interest in obtaining information about impact and use of Channel One. No claim of representativeness of these schools is intended.

Two of the schools are junior high schools, and the third is a high school. Junior High A is located in a large metropolitan area. It has grades 7-9, with 936 students and 75 teachers. Junior High B is located in a town of 19,000 located 20 miles from a large metropolitan area. It consists of grades 6-8, and has 1,068 students and 63 teachers. High School is located in the same town as Junior High B, and has 1,337 students in grades 9-12, and 80 teachers.

Information was gathered in three forms: interviews with principals and teachers during January, 1991; observations of Channel One broadcasts and ensuing discussion in homerooms and regular social studies classes, also during January, 1991, and questionnaires administered during late April, 1991,

to 442 students, 242 parents, and 138 teachers. Questionnaire administrations were conducted by the school staff, with the principal choosing which classes responded to the questionnaire. Parents of students in these classes were asked to respond to a questionnaire. All teachers were asked to respond; 63% returned their questionnaires.

A Glimpse at Channel One in Two Junior High Schools

Before turning to findings from the interviews and questionnaires, a brief sketch of two Channel One broadcasts and ensuing discussions, in each of the junior high schools, will provide some flavor of what actually happens in classrooms. The material is taken from field notes.

Junior High B Observation, January 22, 1991.

Homeroom and Channel One Broadcast. I observed a homeroom from 7:45 to 8:00. There were 19 students. Two of the 19 seemed inattentive during the broadcast. While the students and the regular homeroom teacher watched the program, the history teacher took notes during Channel One for use in his regular classes.

7:46	Channel One broadcast began		
7:46-7:50	POW treatment War summary More POW treatment SCUD missile attacks		
7:50-7:51	Commercials:	M&M's	30 seconds
		Anti-drug	30 seconds
7:51-7:54	High tech weapons smart bombs, chaff		
7:54-7:55	Commercials:	Gillette	45 seconds
		Certs	15 seconds
7:55-7:58	Baltic states--Latvia TWA problems, general airline problems Middle Eastern children in Los Angeles commenting on MidEast problems, and the Gulf War		
7:58	Channel One broadcast ended		

After the end of programming, the homeroom teacher talked to the history teacher for about 3 minutes about an after-school homework program as students chatted quietly. The bell rang and the 1st period began.

Eighth Grade U.S. History Class 2th period: There were 23 students present. The teacher had characterized the class as being "slow".

The class began with a discussion of the Channel One news:

More than half of the class indicated that they had watched TV last night, about treatment of the POW's. T. asked if the POW's were hurt? Most students indicated yes.

S. said the POW's would have had to say those nice things about Iraq. T. pointed out that they could have been hurt during ejection or upon hitting the ground.

S. asked what we [US] can do about violation of Geneva Convention? T. asked what Geneva Convention is. There was a student answer. T. added that they are rules for war. He also mentioned the post-World War II German war crimes and trials, and that this could happen to Hussein. (There was quite a bit of student interest in this)

S. asked: after the war, do prisoners have to be let go? S. said: no country will follow those rules. T. asked if US does. S. said he doubted it--we fight to win.

S. asked if we are trying to capture Hussein; T. didn't know.

[The discussion turned to Martin Luther King's (MLK) birthday.]

T. asked who was MLK. S. said he was a guy who fought for black people's rights and was murdered in Memphis. S. asked about what he did. T. said he was the greatest black leader in history of US.

[The discussion shifted back to the war.]

T. asked what makes this war different. The class discussed smart bombs, missiles. T. talked about the cost of the war, impact on taxes and national debt; cost of missiles, cost of lives.

S. expressed fear of terrorism. T. said they were safe in central Indiana, then talked about possible targets in US.

S. asked if it wasn't dumb to broadcast our plans [on TV] so Iraq can hear them?

Further comments on security, terrorism, precautions made at super bowl game.

There was a brief discussion of Latvia--T. related it to the US Civil War and succession. T. compared Lincoln's starting the Civil War to USSR's desire to keep the USSR together.

T. asked about airline problems. Questions and answers related to gas, fear of travel to Europe and terrorism. T. asked what will happen if only 1 or 2 airlines are left? S's responded with monopoly, increased prices.

After about 15 minutes, the history teacher turned to the regular US history lesson, and I left the class.

Junior High A Observation, January 23, 1991.

I observed the advisor-advisee period (30 minutes at the beginning of the day) with the teacher and his group of students. The period began at 8:35 in the homeroom of 28 students, and after announcements and the CO broadcast, the teacher and his small group of 14 eighth grade advisees moved into a stairwell, where they meet each day because of lack of rooms.

Homeroom with Channel One Broadcast:

8:35-8:43	School announcements over PA system		
8:44	Channel One broadcast begins		
8:44-8:49	SCUD attack on Israel by Iraq Other Gulf war news		
8:49-8:50	Commercials:	Mints	15 sec
		Portable CD Magnavox	30 sec
		Hall's cough drops	15 sec
8:50-8:53	Terrorist attacks threatened by Iraq		
8:53-8:54	Commercials:	Snickers	30 sec
		Anti-drinking/driving	30 sec
8:54-8:56	USSR problems with economy and Latvia Postage rate increase Gulf war rescue of pilot		
8:56	Channel One broadcast ends		

Advisor-Advisee Program Meeting in Stairwell: At 8:58 the small group began discussing the broadcast. The teacher asked the students how much TV news they watched the night before; four indicated they had watched CNN the night before. One student thought Channel One should have other, non-war material in their programming. Then the teacher asked about bunkers, a topic mentioned during the broadcast, and the group discussed what they were. The teacher asked about why Iraq burned the oil wells, and they discussed this. Then he asked them about their concerns about terrorism; some students were truly worried that there might be terrorist acts right there in their city. Then the discussion turned to the Super Bowl, and ended shortly afterward, at 9:05. The discussion was lively, and there was a high level of interest on the students' parts.

One striking aspect of the observations and interviews was the students' reactions to news about the Persian Gulf conflict. (Each month of Channel One programming included plans for weekly "theme" reporting of topics particularly interesting to teen age youth. The war largely preempted coverage of these topics.) Students appeared riveted by the war news, and in these class discussions, the daily broadcasts triggered feeling-laden questions, concerns, and fears. Many students were upset by news of the war; they often knew relatives or others sent to the conflict, and quite a few expressed real fear of terrorist acts in their home towns. Teachers were presented with unusual discussion opportunities--to deal with important events, ideas, and feelings in the classroom. What was done with these opportunities, and what were the results? It is to these questions we now turn.

Findings

The findings are contained in six sections, including outcomes of Channel One, how it is used in school, the quality of the programs, whether the commercials are objectionable, perceived overall value of Channel One, and suggestions for improving Channel One. Teacher responses to the questionnaire are reported for all teachers and for social studies teachers separately.

Outcomes from Using Channel One

Initial interviews revealed that teachers and principals believed that Channel One was increasing students' interest in and knowledge of geography and current events. They pointed out that it was the one "window on the world" through which all students looked each day, and that the information gain resulting from this process was dramatic. These impressions are based on talks with only about 15 teachers or principals, however. In the following sections they are compared with the questionnaire results.

Knowledge of current events and geography.

Students, parents, and teachers were asked two parallel questions about whether student knowledge about current events and news, and of maps and geography, had increased as a result of Channel One. Here is the pattern of how many said yes:

	Have students increased awareness and knowledge of current events and news as a result of Channel One?	Have students increased knowledge of maps and geography as a result of Channel One?	N
Students	76%	38%	444
Teachers	94%	61%	138
S. S. Teachers	100%	60%	16
Parents	76%	48%	242

Three-fourths or more of students, teachers, and parents reported increases of knowledge about current events. For knowledge of maps and geography the level is much lower, with less than half of students and parents believing that this geographic knowledge increased. For both questions, substantially larger proportions of teachers than students or parents observed increases in

knowledge of current events and geography. Another pattern worth noting is not shown in the percentages above: when broken down by schools, the trend was that students, parents, and students in the high school gave consistently less positive responses to these items than in the two junior high schools.

Students were asked the open-ended question, "If you think you have learned important information from Channel One, please give brief examples." By answering with specific knowledge gained from the broadcasts, students helped to prove their other answers more valid. Two hundred and fifty-one out of the total 442 students (57%) gave answers to this question. Nearly half of the answers had to do with the Persian Gulf War. The second most prevalent answer was information about other countries and cultures, with 67 such responses. Eleven commented that they learned the location of other places on the globe. Almost all the other responses had to do with very specific current events or special programs carried by Channel One; they ranged from environmental issues to AIDS to drug use.

Interest in and attention to news.

A teacher commented on a questionnaire that a student's parents "...have expressed [that] their children are more interested in the news because of Channel One." A parent wrote, "Yes, my child can get news from other sources, but Channel One has been a positive tool in stimulating interest to further check out those other sources." Another parent reflects: "My child actually looks forward to watching Channel One. The program is presented in a way children understand and in a way that is interesting to them. The program seems to bring the world to them on their level and make it more real." A teacher reported: "It gave the students the opportunity for seeing history being made. They became involved in discussions because of this." These anecdotes suggest a powerful pull of Channel One on students.

How typical are these perceptions that Channel One promotes interest in news and world events? Three questionnaire items were included to address this idea. Percentages of students, teachers, and parents noting interest increases in students are as follow:

	Increased watching regular TV news	Increased reading newspapers or news magazines	Increased talking about news with parents, siblings, friends
Students	43%	29%	45%
Teachers	33%	13%	70%
S.S. Teachers	56%	13%	81%
Parents	43%	29%	52%

About 40% of all three groups noted an increase in students watching regular TV news, while fewer reported an increase in reading about news. More than two-thirds of the teachers saw an increase in students talking about the news, while slightly less than half of the students, and about half of the parents, reported an increase. Social studies teachers gave more positive estimates than teachers as a whole on two of the three student interest indicators.

The responses to these interest questions tend to confirm the open-ended comments by parents and teachers reported before. However, students talking with others and watching TV news increased much more than reading, according to these answers. For the former two questions, high school responses were less positive, while for increased reading, responses were about even for junior and senior high schools.

Communication between students and their parents.

> "I think it is a good concept to help make young adolescents aware of current issues that have an impact on their lives now and may also affect their futures. Our child had spoken of it frequently...so it is making an impact on the students." (From a parent questionnaire)

One possible indication that Channel One is making an impact is that students talk to their parents more at home about current events covered in the daily broadcasts. Students and their parents were asked in the questionnaire to report on whether students had talked to parents about news events that they saw in school on Channel One. Here are the results:

	Not happened	Happened Occasionally	Happened often
Students	22%	60%	18%
Parents	19%	51%	30%

While a larger proportion of parents indicated that talk about news happened often, about 80% of both students and parents reported some discussion of the news at home as a result of Channel One. This suggests an impact of the program outside school.

Students and parents were asked to note on the questionnaire events from programs that they talked about, and there was a wide range of topics reported. As would be expected, the Persian Gulf War was mos often mentioned. On hundred fifty-one of the 242 parents mentioned it, as did 191 of the 442 students. Many other topics were named, such as the U.S. space program, the environment, and drug use. None of them compared in frequency to the Gulf War, however.

Communication between parents and their children about adult matters is one of the most important facets of education. By promoting this communication, Channel One contributes to education in non-school settings. As one parent observed, "At first it was kind of a joke -- 'Guess what I did in school today, I watched Channel One!'. Then we'd talk about it at the supper table." Conversations about important matters at the supper table are as much, or more, a part of education as class discussions in school.

The open-ended comments on questionnaires, informal conversations with teaching staff, and the tabulation of questionnaire responses to standard items by students, teachers, and parents all show increases in students' knowledge, interest, and communication about news and current events as a result of Channel One.

Use of Channel One in Classrooms

Although Channel One is not aimed solely at the social studies curriculum, the preliminary interviews showed that principals and teachers alike believed that social studies was the foremost subject in which it would be used by teachers and students. In Junior High B, all the sixth grade language arts teachers were employing information daily from Channel One to stimulate ideas for writing done by students.

A group interview with eight social studies teachers in Junior High B suggested that the primary uses of the news broadcast were to supplement information about relevant topics in regular lessons, and to stimulate discussions of current events issues. Only one teacher indicated that the commercials were the object of inquiry, although a principal in another school indicated that inquiry into the commercials should be part of their use in the curriculum. We turn to the questionnaire results for further insights into how Channel One was used in the classrooms.

Channel One as the basis for class discussion.

Teachers were asked whether they held "...regular class discussions, aside from homeroom about news and information from Channel One programs". One-third of all teachers indicated that they had such regular discussions in class, and only one-quarter of the teachers in the high school reported regular discussions. Half of the 16 social studies teachers said they had regular discussions; none were from the high school, where six science teachers did report discussions.

In contrast to this relatively low level of Channel One discussion reported by teachers, 59% of the students indicated that one or more of their teachers conducted Channel One discussions, with the proportion much lower for the high school--28%. Half of all students named social studies as the class in which discussions took place; for English classes 29% of the students reported regular discussions, for science 9%, and mathematics 5%.

The difference between proportions of teachers and students reporting class discussions is probably explained by the way questions were asked of the two groups. Students were asked: "Do any of your teachers hold class discussions about news and information from Channel One programs?" without the "aside from homeroom" qualification, while teachers were asked about conducting "regular" discussions and students were not.

Testing in class on information from Channel One.

Twenty-one per cent of the 442 students indicated that teachers gave tests or assignments on Channel One material in class; nearly all named social

studies (70%) or English (19%) as classes in which testing or assignments were used. Nine of the 138 teachers (including three social studies teachers) reported testing or making assignments on Channel One, with nearly all teaching in Junior High B. There is a distinct difference in perceptions between teachers and students on extent of testing and assignments.

Use of Channel One publications and "Classroom Channel" by teachers.

Teachers have as instructional resources two publications and a separate resource video program, called the "Classroom Channel," to use in conjunction with or in addition to the regular Channel One programming. When asked whether they found the two publications, "Channel One Teachers' Guide," and the "Classroom Channel Teachers's Guide" useful, 40% of the teachers (50% of the social studies teachers) indicated that they did. Typical uses of the guides were to inform teachers and students in advance what special programs were to be shown, and to provide discussion questions and ideas.

The supplementary "Classroom Channel" video program, consists of about 250 enrichment video programs distributed annually to Channel One schools. When asked if they used any of these programs, 17% (25% of social studies teachers) said yes. A variety of programs were used by English, social studies, science, and health teachers.

One benefit of the Channel One installation is having videotape playback capability in all classrooms, and well over half of the teachers are taking advantage of this. Most of these teachers said that they used the equipment for playing non-Channel One videos in their classes. Other uses included watching news, taping and playing school events, taping lectures for use by a substitute teacher, taping guest speakers, and showing student-created videos.

In summary, teachers report very moderate levels of in-class use of Channel One, with less than half conducting regular classroom discussions on the programs, and very few testing or making assignments on Channel One material. Students report higher rates of class discussion and testing than teachers. Teachers make use of the Channel One publications, and often use the video equipment for showing other material in their classes.

Quality and Objectionable Content of Channel One Programming

Much criticism of Channel One has addressed superficiality of the programming. Students and teachers were asked several identical questions relating to the perceived quality of Channel One programming, including its accuracy, importance, depth, and bias. They were also asked to compare Channel One with regular network TV news shows regarding the commentators' competence and the overall quality of news.

Many would agree that accuracy, depth, and lack of bias are important standards of quality for news programs. Teachers and students give relatively high marks to Channel One on these qualities. The following results show the percentages of students and teachers agreeing with these statements:

	The information on Channel one is accurate and important	The depth of coverage on topics is adequate on Channel One	The programs on Channel One do not have bias for any one point of view
Students	58%	60%	43%
Teachers	85%	87%	66%
S.S. Teachers	88%	88%	40%

Teachers as a group rate these three quality indicators more positively than do students, although social studies teachers are more critical of bias than their colleagues. Also, there seems to be a distinctly lower evaluation of absence of bias, compared to accuracy and depth, especially among students.

Students and teachers also compared Channel One commentators and overall quality of news with that on network TV news programs in the following questions. Percentages indicate agreement with the statements:

	The commentators on Channel One are about as competent as on regular TV news	The quality of Channel One news is about as good as regular TV news
Students	43%	48%
Teachers	77%	70%
S.S. Teachers	69%	50%

Once again, the teachers evaluate these aspects of Channel One at a distinctly higher level than students, while social studies teachers side

more with students on the general quality (second) comparison. Students seem to be harsher critics of Channel One quality than the teaching staff. When these responses are broken down by school, the students and teachers in High School were less positive than those in the two junior high schools.

To check for perceptions of objectionable content being presented on Channel One, teachers were asked if they saw examples of this, and if so, to give specific examples. Twenty-four teachers, five of them teaching social studies, did report what they judged as objectionable segments on the programs. Most of those who gave specific examples identified programs with sexual content: distribution of condoms in high school or other birth control, teen age sex and pregnancy, and date rape. For example, a teacher in Junior High A commented:

> Some segments are not as relevant for Jr. High such as dating. Date-rape was really the only segment we questioned, but [we] decided that it would be shown -- and make sure discussions follow. Again, 7th graders had a harder time relating and discussing this.

(It was only in this school that the teachers reported having an active role in the screening of Channel One programs before they were broadcast in school.) The other content judged to be objectionable by teachers included a program on inner city life, a presentation of family types that a teacher believed was biased against American values, and a treatment of world religions that was judged inaccurate by a teacher.

Teachers in Junior High B reported that at least two programs had been not shown because their sexual content was judged to be controversial or inappropriate; there was no censorship reported in the other two schools. Five teachers commented on this censorship, some supporting it and others opposing it:

> They [programs with objectionable content] were not shown. [The] principal opted to cancel Channel One on those days. [That was a] good decision on part of the principal.
>
> The segment on date rape was not shown to our junior high students. I agreed with this censorship because it is not yet applicable to most of our students.
>
> The school did not show a segment that featured birth control. I felt it should have been shown.

> On two occasions this year only segments of Channel One were shown. I totally disagree with this censorship.
>
> Our school censored some programs involving sexual topics. One morning this was done so abruptly that it caused more of a disturbance than the actual show probably would have.

It is clear that these Junior High B teachers agree that Channel One is important, but there is disagreement about censoring programs.

In summary, how highly do students and teachers rate the quality of Channel One? Both groups respond quite positively to questions about accuracy, importance, depth, and lack of bias, as well as the competence of the news commentators. However, for every question at least 22% more teachers than students give positive responses. This is somewhat surprising, because teachers were expected to be more critical about programming quality than students. Another pattern in the responses is that both groups are least positive when it comes to rating lack of bias--43% of students and 66% of teachers judge that there is no biased point of view on Channel One programming. Social studies teachers, however, tend to agree with students' judgments about level of bias. The issue of perceived bias is an important one, and deserves further study through interview of teachers and students, and content analysis of programs.

Twenty-four teachers pointed out what they believed to be objectionable content, most often sexual in nature. There was censorship of two programs in one of the three schools, with a difference of opinion among teachers in that school about whether such programs should be withheld from students.

This leads us to the issue of Channel One commercials.

Are the Channel One Commercials Objectionable?

The two minutes of commercials each day on Channel One are a very controversial aspect of the program. Teachers and administrators reported in the preliminary interviews that students tended to complain about or ignore the two minutes of commercials in the daily broadcast. They believed that the impact of the commercials was very small or nonexistent. This suggested checking students' and teachers' perceptions more directly.

Two questions were asked of students and teachers about commercialss, with the following percentages indicating agreement:

	The commercials on Channel One are not offensive to me	I have no objection to commercials being part of Channel One programs
Students	76%	73%
Teachers	77%	72%
S.S. Teachers	81%	69%
Parents	NA	65%

Three out of four or more students and teachers report the commerciials as not being offensive. When the "no opinion" responses are ignored, 6% of students and 12% of teachers disagreed with the statement about commerciaals not being offensive. For the "no objection to commercials" question, 11%9 of students and 18% of teachers disagreed, indicating that a relatively smalll fraction have objections to the commercials.

Parents reported a higher level of discomfort with commercials. Thhe "no objection" question resulted in a lower agreement level and there were 177% who disagreed with the statement outright. All ten open-ended parent commentts about commercials were critical. Some called for the elimination of advertisements, while others wanted them limited. Here are some of the comments:

> If commercials are necessary to underwrite costs they should be carefully screened, i.e., yogurt and orange juice for "nutritious snacks"--not candy bars! Avoid heroes and peer pressure selling shhoes, etc. (Commercials endorsed by schools have a very powerful effect as I'm sure advertisers are well aware.)
>
> I think the content and subject matter of commercials should be carefully screened. A discussion about the purpose of commercials and perhaps a disclaimer such as: "the administration/school does not endorse the product" would be appropriate.
>
> If commercials have to be used, they should be appropriate for teenagers. The public service messages about staying in school aree excellent. But a movie review that should have been rated "R" is aa very bad choice. Overall, news in the classroom is a great idea, and I think it should definitely be continued.
>
> I agree current events are very important, but commercials detract from what is trying to be accomplished.

While the opinions of even a small minority must be considered seriously, the overall level of reported discomfort with commercials is quite small.

Overall Value of Channel One for Schools

Seventy-one of the teachers (ten social studies teachers) reported having talked with parents of their students about Channel One broadcasts. When asked if the parents' opinions about Channel One were positive or negative, 62 teachers reported positive opinions, five reported both positive and negative opinions, and two were negative; the remaining two teachers did not indicate the direction.

Information from all three groups responding to the questionnaire reinforces the very positive teacher reports of parent conversations. Students, teachers, and parents were asked three identical or parallel questions about overall value to the school program. Here are the percentages agreeing with each statement:

	Channel One in school seems unnecessary because students can get news from other sources	Channel One seems to be a worthwhile addition to the school	Channel One seems to be a positive addition to my: [students: "school day"] [teachers: "teaching"] [parents: "child's education"]
Students	11%	76%	61%
Teachers	6%	90%	58%
S.S. Teachers	6%	94%	88%
Parents	11%	83%	75%

These responses show clearly that all three groups place value on Channel One. Few agree with the notion that the information students get from the program is redundant and therefore unnecessary. Three-quarters or more see it as a positive addition to the school's curriculum when asked a general question of worth (the second statement,) and well over half agree with a more personalized version of the worth idea (the third statement). Social studies teachers see it most positively of all the groups.

As the individuals responsible for wise use of limited time and energy in delivering the curriculum in school, teachers are in a good position to judge worth of Channel One from that perspective. Therefore, teachers were asked to agree or disagree with the statement: "Channel One is worth the time and effort we spend on it." Eight per cent disagreed, and 87% (94% of the social studies teachers) agreed, with the others having no opinion. This shows that teachers, when considering the alternative uses of their own time and that of students, strongly endorse Channel One as an addition to the academic program of the school.

Additional insights about teachers' beliefs about the instructional value of Channel One surfaced when teachers were asked to give specific examples of extra teaching resources derived from Channel One. Forty-six gave open-ended answers. Several felt that students' increased knowledge of current affairs aided their ability to link current events to their regular teaching, and increased the quality of discussions. Several others found their new TV receiver handy for playing special videos to supplement other instructional materials. Other teachers cited specific subject-related benefits gained from Channel One, such as giving examples and current information on topics like environmental science otherwise not available from texts or other sources. A teacher observed that Channel One had reinforced the school's emphasis on values education. Another liked the Channel One "public service" commercials urging students to stay in school.

In summary, responses to a variety of questions about the overall worth of Channel One are very positive. While some do not agree, there is a strong majority of students, teachers, and parents who believe that Channel One is a valuable part of the school program.

Suggestions for Improving Channel One Programs

The students, teachers, and parents were asked for suggestions to improve Channel One programming.

Commercials. More comments--by 42 students, 10 parents, and 19 teachers-- were made about commercials than any other topic. Eight students

two parents, and five teachers wanted them eliminated entirely; 12 students and four teachers wanted fewer; and 18 students and nine teachers urged reducing repetition of the same commercials. Other suggestions included removing MTV and movie ads; "better," "more appropriate," and "less strident" commercials; careful screening by school staff; and a disclaimer that schools don't endorse commercials.

Interest and relevance. Twenty-four students, eight teachers, and two parents made suggestions about increasing the interest and relevance for junior and senior high school audiences. Many of the students wanted more material geared specifically to their age level, and one teacher suggested splitting Channel One into separate junior and senior high broadcasts.

Level and tone. Perhaps predictably, Senior High respondents made the suggestions about raising the level of the programming, and the comments made were very pointed. Fifteen students and three teachers suggested that the commentators "talked down" to their audience, appeared immature, and used too low a vocabulary level. Some comments included words and phrases like "patronizing," and "...as if we are stupid."

Other suggestions. Several other suggestions about programming details and content were made, but there were no prominent themes. However, seven students called for more depth on all coverage. Supporting these student suggestions for more depth were 44 students who wanted a program longer than 12 minutes. In contrast, eight students and one teacher wanted Channel One terminated in their schools.

Discussion

Social studies teachers, as well as teachers in other subjects, were not making extensive use of Channel One. Some were including it in class discussions, and a few incorporated special Channel One videos in addition to the regular daily broadcast. Very few used information from the program in their assignments and tests. This pattern of relatively low use is even more true of the high school than the two middle schools.

Several explanations might account for the lack of integration of Channel One into social studies, and other, classrooms. First, it is shown in homerooms, at a time and place usually different than regular classes, and the teachers lack the opportunity for its use immediately after the broadcast when it is fresh in students' and teachers' minds. In the two middle schools, there was also some time available for its discussion after the broadcast in the homeroom, and teachers in regular classes might have assumed that more discussion would be redundant.

A second possible explanation is that the social studies (and other) teachers believed the program to be of low quality, and therefore rejected its use. This possibility does not square well with the teacher questionnaire or interview data, however; social studies teachers' ratings were particularly high.

A third possible reason is that the program was so new to the teachers that they had not yet thought out a range of strategies for its use, and needed more time before "adopting" it into their regular teaching routine and materials (Johnston, 1991a). Whatever the explanation, this issue needs further study, including with class observations and in-depth teacher interviews.

Another intriguing pattern in the data is the more positive evaluation of Channel One by teachers as compared to their students. Students were more critical than teachers of the three quality indicators in the questionnaires--depth, accuracy, and bias--and less likely to think that their knowledge and awareness had increased as a result of the programs. This might signal nothing more than students' desire to be critical, or their reaction against a part of school. They consume large quanities of television, and perhaps are more expert and critical as a result (Lesko, 1991). Or it might mean that teachers' more positive responses are rationalizations by adult authorities for the decision to adopt Channel One for the schools. Whatever the explanation, it deserves more thorough investigation.

The commercials, perhaps the most debatable aspect of Channel One, are viewed by about three-quarters of students, parents, and teachers as non-problematic. Most of the students and teachers who do object give non-ethical grounds; the advertisements' repetitive nature seems to bother them the most. Others, mostly parents, give more value-based reasons for their concerns.

Almost no one in these three schools sees the commercials as a legitimate object of study--as material for examining tools of persuasion, identifying cultural, or delving into the values of the society. Advertising is, after all, a pervasive and important social phenomenon, and students could profit from examining it reflectively. Their ethical aspect aside, the commercials are a convenient vehicle for raising critical thinking levels in social studies classrooms, but this possibility is lost on nearly everyone.

Some journalism educators do argue that all of Channel One's content--news programming and commercials--should be studied with these goals in mind. Considine (1990) argues for "media literacy" as a set of critical skills needed by reflective citizens. Sneed et al. (1989) suggest that those arguing against Channel One because the students are "captive audiences" for advertisements ignore the potential for learning to be critical consumers of the mass media. They call for widespread adoption of media studies in social studies classrooms. Except for one social studies teacher's comment, there is no glimmer of such media education gaining a foothold in the three schools studied in this research, however.

A powerful critique of television by Postman (1985) concludes that this medium is an awesome social problem, and one that cannot be turned off, no matter how much some (including Postman) would like that. He explains,

> The problem, in any case, does not reside in <u>what</u> people watch. The problem is <u>that</u> we watch. The solution must be found in <u>how</u> we watch. For I believe it may fairly be said that we have yet to learn what television is. And the reason is that there has been no worthwhile discussion, let alone widespread public understanding, of what information is and how it gives direction to a culture. (p. 160)

While perhaps an unlikely outcome of Channel One, it is possible that it could lead to a worthwhile discussion of television, and information, issues. Media literacy could be incorporated into the meaning of "education," and could be

as much a part of citizenship education as understanding and appreciating individual rights and respect for others. In fact, critical "consuming" of the media might be an important part of these and other crucial social education goals.

The picture drawn at this early phase of my study shows a strong contradiction: while students, parents, and teachers endorse Channel One rather strongly, it is not being used very widely as an instructional resource. As Justice Martin in North Carolina argued, it has been adopted, but not integrated. Perhaps teachers believe that its passive reception by students, like their listening to lectures and reading textbooks, will lead to positive outcomes. Or perhaps teachers simply have not had the time and experience to blend it into their classes. Whether the integration of Channel One into regular instruction and curriculum will evolve over time remains to be seen.

Questions for Further Research

What questions are important to study further? One source of questions has been teachers and principals in this study. They were asked to respond to a questionnaire item: "Please make suggestions about specific aspects of Channel One that need to be evaluated through formal studies in schools." Answers to this question were blended with ideas from face-to-face discussions with the principal and teachers, from observing Channel One being used, analysis of the questionnaire information, and literature on the topic. This has resulted in the following questions for future study:

1. Does Channel One have a measurable impact on students' knowledge of current events, different cultures, and geography?
2. Are students more aware of how news events relate to their lives?
3. Does Channel One use lead students to seek out news away from school? What percentage watch TV news at home and read newspapers or news magazines?
4. What is the impact of Channel One on communications between students and parents?
5. What is the quality of Channel One, using such criteria as depth, importance, accuracy, and lack of bias?

6. What specific Channel One characteristics are related to student and teacher perceptions of program quality?

7. What is the student perception of vocabulary level and general intellectual level of the programming, and does this have an influence on their attention level and the credibility of the news broadcast on Channel One?

8. What is the influence of Channel One's commercials on students? Do the commercials decrease overall attention to the rest of the programming?

9. In what ways do teachers use Channel One information to teach their regular subjects? What are enablers and inhibitors of Channel One use?

10. How is Channel One being used in homerooms by teachers, and what are its outcomes in that setting?

11. Is use of Channel One cost-effective--do the costs to the school justify the outcomes derived from its use?

My research on Channel One has incorporated a number of these questions, and I hope to pursue more in the future. Not all of them can be addressed with current time and other resources. The first question, having to do with impact on knowledge, and the fifth, requiring content analysis of the programs, are beyond the capability of the present study, but are being researched by the staff of the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research, within a three-year study of Channel One (Johnston, 1991b). The eighth and eleventh questions, regarding the impact of commercials on students and cost-effectiveness issues, are similarly out of reach of the present study, and no research on either of these important topics is known to be underway. I hope to address the other questions, in one way or another, and report more findings later.

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